# LANSING POLICE DEPARTMENT



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Internal Board of Review Report RE: Police Shooting of Joseph Farnsworth June 2, 2009

### **Executive Summary**

On February 18, 2008 Lansing Police Department (LPD) Officers Joseph Riedel and Brian Rendon responded to 1116 Lenore Street on a report of a subject (Joseph Farnsworth) threatening to kill himself with a knife. Upon contact with Farnsworth in his garage, officers attempted to handcuff the subject for his safety. Farnsworth moved quickly to pick up a box cutter from his workbench and moved toward the officers with a striking motion. Officer Riedel was armed with a Taser but did not see the knife. Officer Rendon fired one round from his duty weapon striking Farnsworth. First aid was immediately rendered and an ambulance transported Farnsworth to a local hospital.

An investigation by the Michigan State Police (MSP) was conducted per LPD procedure regarding the Use of Deadly Force. A report was submitted by MSP to the Ingham County Prosecutor's Office (ICPO), which cleared Officer Rendon of any criminal wrongdoing. An LPD internal affairs review was conducted to determine if administrative disciplinary rules had been violated. Thereafter an Internal Board of Review was convened by Captain Teresa Szymanski to determine if applicable policies and procedures were followed and to make recommendations as appropriate.

The Internal Board determined that policies and procedures were followed, and makes the following three recommendations: 1) when possible deploy a Mental Health Professional to the scene of an incident involving an agitated PRT; 2) develop a Regional Crisis PRT Intervention Team; and 3) implement a 2<sup>nd</sup> Rapid Response Vehicle for the South Precinct, as part of a Special Tactics and Rescue Team (or S.T.A.R.T) tactical response.

#### The Internal Board of Review

An Internal Board of Review was convened at the direction of Lansing Police Department (LPD) Chief Mark E. Alley. The Board conducted an administrative review of the use of deadly force against Joseph Farnsworth at 1116 Lenore Street on February 18, 2008. The Board was comprised of Captain Edward Forrest, Lieutenant Michael Yankowski, Police Legal Advisor Michael Mathis and Captain Teresa Szymanski as Chairperson and was charged with determining whether administrative procedures had been followed. In reviewing this matter, Board Members examined the following documents:

- 1. MSP Report 010-0000050-08
- 2. Transcript of initial 911 Call
- 3. 911 Communication Center Call for Service
- 4. Photographs of the scene
- 5. Diagram of the scene drawn by LPD Crime Scene Investigators
- 6. LPD Operational Procedure 300-24, Outside Investigation
- 7. LPD Operational Procedure 600-7, Use of Force
- 8. LPD Operational Procedure 600-39, Police Involved Death or Serious Injury
- 9. LPD Incident Report LLA080218010840
- 10. Use of Force Report by Sergeant Darin Southworth
- 11. Interview of Officer Brian Rendon
- 12. Report from Ingham County Prosecuting Attorney Stuart Dunnings

# **Summary Statement of Dr. Lucas**

On the day of the incident, Dr. Carol Lucas called 911 after receiving a phone call from Dori Farnsworth. A couple of weeks before this incident, Dr. Lucas had met with Mr. Farnsworth.

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Internal Board of Review Report

RE: Police Shooting of Joseph Farnsworth

June 2, 2009

### **Incident Summary**

On February 18, 2008, LPD responded to 1116 Lenore Street on a report. Dispatch received a 911 call from Dr. Lucas reporting that she received a phone call from the wife of Joseph Farnsworth. Officers Riedel and Rendon were assigned to Uniform Patrol and were the first officers to arrive on scene. They parked their patrol car on the street and walked up the driveway. They noticed a man and woman inside of the unattached garage. The garage door was open and the garage interior was lit with ambient light. The garage contained a workbench, tools and shelving units.

When officers arrived they noticed that Mr. Farnsworth was not wearing a shirt and was leaning on the workbench. Officers spoke with the female, identified as Dori Farnsworth, who identified the male as her husband Joseph Farnsworth. Officers asked Dori to leave the garage so they could speak to her husband. Dori complied with their request. Officer Riedel engaged Joseph Farnsworth in conversation and informed him that he was there to help him. Officer Rendon was positioned on the left side of the garage with his duty weapon at the low ready. Officer Riedel was positioned to Officer Rendons right with his Taser at the low ready.

Officers observed Joseph Farnsworth as being agitated, upset and pounding his fist on his workbench. Joseph Farnsworth raised his hands above his head and smashed them back down on the bench. Farnsworth grabbed the utility knife, turned towards the officers and took two aggressive steps toward them. Officer Riedel was armed with a Taser but did not see the utility knife. Officer Rendon fired one round striking Farnsworth in the stomach. Farnsworth was standing approximately four feet away from Officer Rendon when he fired the round. First aid was rendered and an ambulance transported Joseph Farnsworth to the hospital.

#### **Summary of Joseph Farnsworth's Statement**

MSP Investigators interviewed Joseph Farnsworth on February 20, 2008. He repeatedly said that he did not blame the officers for shooting him and that it wasn't the officer's fault.

### **Review of the Timeline**

The 911 Communication Center received the initial call from Dr. Lucas at 5:16 p.m. Officers Rendon and Riedel were the first to arrive on scene at 5:21 p.m. Officer Lowe requested an ambulance at 5:26 p.m. The incident unfolded rapidly.

### Board's Findings as to the Officer's Use of Force

The Board finds that Officer Rendon's use of force was appropriate and consistent with LPD procedures, training and law.

## **Summary of Findings**

After a thorough review of all available information, the Board concludes that the shooting of Joseph Farnsworth on February 18, 2008 at 1116 Lenore Street, Lansing, Michigan was lawful and in accordance with departmental policies and procedures.

#### **Summary of Recommendations**

- 1) Where possible, deploy a Mental Health Professional to the incident.
- 2) Develop a Crisis Intervention Team
- 3) Implement a 2nd Rapid Response Vehicle for the South Precinct.

#### Conclusion

Officer Riedel was armed with a Taser but did not see the knife. Therefore, Officer Rendon deployed deadly force in his decision to fire one round from his service weapon. Officer Rendon based this on the facts and information available at the time the incident was taking place. Police officers make decisions based on their training and experience. This Board concludes that the officer's actions were within established LPD administrative procedures.